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AN
ACCOUNT

OF THE

CONVERSION

OF
EDWARD LEE,

A MALEFACTOR,

Who was executed at Haverford-West, in Wales,
for a Robbery.

In a LETTER from the late Rev. Mr. CENNICK, to
his Friend in London. (2.)

L O N D O N:

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near Cheap-side. 1789.

[Price Three-pence.]

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ACCOUNT



CONVULSION

EDWARD LEE

A MALARIA FEVER

Who was executed at Tyburn, in Wales,
for a robbery.

In a letter from the Rev. Mr. Cressick, to
his friend, London.



LONDON:

Printed and sold by H. Tupper, No. 1, Pall-mall East,
near Chancery, 1789.
[Price Threepence.]

A N

ACCOUNT, &c.

DEAR BROTHER,

May 1, 1753.

FOR these two posts I have neglected to write, because I longed to see an affair accomplished, the relation of which will, no doubt, give you to partake with me in inexpressible thankfulness. I have therefore copied my journal, though I have been busied the whole day, and am quite fatigued and weary, and it grows late. I shall therefore begin from Thursday the 26th of April.

IN the afternoon, after I had earnestly wished to see one Edward Lee, who was condemned a few days ago for a robbery, I was brought by brother Sparks's means to him. I spoke freely with him of our Saviour, and told him that he himself had once suffered the death of the tree, and had pardoned a malefactor who suffered with him; and wished he would apply to that dear Redeemer, and get forgiveness at his hands, before he should be obliged to leave the world, &c.

He behaved very sullen and stupid, and would scarce speak, and answered nothing; however, I prayed with him in an earnest and hearty manner;

A 2

but

but he sat still, and did not offer to kneel. My heart was open, and felt a near access to the Lamb; which, I believe he also felt, for he desired I would visit him again; which I promised, and so took leave of him for the present. Hence I visited a justice of the peace, who lives opposite to the gaol, and is friendly to us with his whole family; afterwards I walked out alone in the Priory fields; at seven I preached on the "Good Shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep."

Friday 27. For these two days I have not been well with a cold, but to-day I found myself better, and walked out early in the fields toward St. David's, where I spent an hour with the Saviour about my heart, and returned to Mr. Sparks, where I breakfasted, and spoke with a young man who is under solid conviction. At eleven I walked out to dine at a cottage in the country, about two miles from town. In my way I walked among the ruins of St. Mary Magdalene's church, and visited a poor family, who live in a hut built in the old walls. I had with me two companions, and about twelve we came to the place where we dined, called Jeremiah's castle, it is just like one of the poor Irish cabbins, built with mud, but neat and clean; and here lives a pretty family of our people, with whom we spent some hours in a very comfortable manner. When they come to the meetings, which they daily do, they lock up the door, and leave the rest to the care of our Saviour.

At four we came to St. Thomas's, to see one Owen, an honest downright man, out of the Welch parts. Here several of our friends met us. We sung some hymns, and spoke with much simplicity of

of our happiness in Christ, and how miserable a soul can be who leaves him, or acts unfaithful to him. At the usual time I preached from that text out of the epistle to the church of Smyrna: "I know thy poverty, but thou art rich."

Saturday 28. WE intended to have visited our prisoner again, but the jailor was afraid to suffer us, because a minister had told him, if we came, he would come no more. Brother Sparks waited on the sheriff, Mr. ———, about it, who said, he thought the more ministers and good people visited the prisoner, the better. He gave an order in writing to the jailor, to let us see him. He was in a poor melancholy condition, and answered to all we said, in a low broken tone, with many sighs. I begged him not to conceal any thing which might be of any benefit to himself or others, but make a confession of all which burdened his conscience; which he said he would do in writing before he died. I spoke again to him of our Saviour, with a burning heart, and assured him if he would go to him with all his guilt, he would get pardon. We sung also some verses with a tender feeling of grace, and in the same spirit prayed and wept altogether, and felt the Lamb quite near us. We recommended him now to Christ's bleeding wounds, and took leave.

ABOUT ten o'clock I set out on foot for Pembroke, a brother brought me forward as far as Claristown, near five miles, and then returned. Afterwards a poor man overtaking me, conducted me quite to Pembroke. We waited an hour at the ferry, but yet got in before appointed, and at seven

had a most lovely meeting in a room, which was quite full to the door.

Sunday 29, I PREACHED at eight, and had still a larger congregation. Hence we walked about six miles to Claristown, and had in our company sixteen on foot, besides some on horseback, who followed us. At Claristown we met several from Haverford-West, and I preached in the open fields, to about seven hundred people, on the parable of the prodigal Son. After dinner we hastened to town, where at five I preached the third time this day, on the open quay, to a serious congregation, on these words, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. It was an awful sight to see the ships full of people, listening to the gospel, and though many sailors were present, yet all behaved exceeding well. We had purposed, with the Owner's leave, to have preached in the castle, but as it was so near to the Methodists, lest any should think we did it to draw their people away, we altered it out of good-will. At seven I met the society, spoke to them freely, and sung near an hour, which also was a happy meeting.

WE now visited the prisoner again, and I had never more liberty to speak with him. He was quite free also and open, and told me he believed at times that our Saviour loved him, but a sense of his sins made him afraid. We spoke comfortably to him, and prayed with melted hearts and eyes to the Lamb for him, and he, poor heart, knelt down, loaded with chains hand and foot, and joined with us in a sinner-like manner. We kissed him, but could hardly part; but promised to

to come again to-morrow. At parting, he put into my hands a whole sheet of paper, wrote full of the most remarkable bad deeds of his wicked life, which had been abominable and without measure. It was noised soon about, and at night the sheriff himself came to desire a sight of it; to which I consented, upon his promise, that none should see it, or have it out of his hands, till after Lee's death.

Monday 30. ALL night I slept but little, and dreamed and waked with all my thoughts taken up about the prisoner. I went with the sheriff and brother Sparks to visit him, but was not easy till I could be with him alone; and accordingly got an order from the sheriff to the jailor, to this end. I was near half an hour with him; he opened his heart quite freely, and answered all I wanted, but could not enough thank me for my care of him. I asked him how he felt in his heart? He said, "Last night I thought I felt more of our Saviour's love, than in my whole life;" but because of his many great sins, which crowded often on his mind, he soon became again disconsolate. I prayed with him after the sheriff and jailor came in, and sung that hymn, "Jesus my light and sure defence." Some scores of pious people waited without doors under a window, where they could hear distinctly, and joined with us with many tears. We now prayed the sheriff that as few as possible might be admitted to see him, because it disturbed him. Now we returned home, and at five the sheriff came to us again, and gave us all the liberty we could desire to visit the prisoner. Afterwards I visited a Quaker, who had this morning hastened from Carmarthen, that

that he might see and pray with the prisoner. I related to him, his mother and wife, what had passed, which filled our eyes with tears; at seven preached on, "For this cause was the Son of God manifested; that he might destroy the works of the devil," with uncommon demonstration of the Spirit and power of God. And when I prayed for him appointed to die, (which I did with all my heart) I believe no dry eye could have been seen.

AT nine we went to the justice, where we waited for the sheriff, and with him went in alone, and spent about an hour with our prisoner. He said, I am glad you are come, I have longed for you; and could not enough shew his joy, that we were again with him, and sung some of our hymns, which were in a penitential strain; then we made an hearty prayer for him, accompanied by many, who stood without, weeping; and once more we recommended him to the Lamb. But I saw he had no mind to let us go; my very bowels yearned over him, and I could contentedly have staid with him all night.

MAY 1. BEFORE six we called up the sheriff and visited the prisoner again, for I could not rest till I was with him, and my heart had been without ceasing speaking with our Saviour for him all the night. And this morning he sighed when we came in, and told us he had never known such a long heavy night, or felt so before, the guilt and weight of his sins. An horrible dread had overwhelmed him, and his heart sunk within him, he was like one distracted and ready to perish, with almost all hope vanished; so that our early coming
was

was an unspeakable blessing to him. We received from him a paper wherein he enlarged his confession, and by some pretty expressions betrayed that the Holy Spirit was at work with him. I took and copied it; then read it with what I had copied before, and desired him to alter any thing which was wrong or misunderstood; but he signed it, and said it needed no alteration. One of our people came now and shaved and washed him. Mean while I read the whole fifteenth chapter of St. Luke, how "all the publicans drew near to hear him," and made observations on all the gracious words of our Saviour in the parable of the lost sheep, and prodigal Son, to which he attended with streams of tears; before we parted, we sung some hymns and prayed in a blessed manner; but he was so drowned in tears, and trembled so that he could scarcely kneel upright.

BUT now the happy moment came for his deliverance; the thankful remembrance of which so affects me, that I can scarce write for tears of joy; he said, as he felt his heart released, "Now I believe there is mercy in store for me; now I believe I shall be saved; my fear of death is gone, and I feel such comfort, which makes me believe I shall never be afraid again." As he had, of his own accord, wished to have the sacrament, and the receiving of which is commonly looked upon as a mark of repentance; so I prayed the sheriff to desire the minister of the parish to give it him. Mean while we were at Mr. W—, the justice, and breakfasted. As soon as the minister was gone, the prisoner sent for us, and now we (brother S— and I) were locked

in with him alone, and nobody offered to disturb us.

As soon as we entered, he smiled and said, he could not help sending for us, and counted the time long while we were absent. I said, O we are glad to come, and have just parted with many christian friends, who are weeping and praying for you to our Saviour. With shame and humility he thanked them. I told him, I cannot tell you how all the children of God hereabout love you, and how many thousand prayers are made for you without ceasing. We sat down close to him on his straw, and looked upon him and spoke with him with pleasure. O how did his countenance alter! his dark hardened look was gone, and the mark of the Lamb shone out of his face; so that we could say little, but weep together with him for joy. He said, "Now I believe all the darkness and sorrow is at an eternal end. I should rather have suffered this shameful death in any other place, than where I have been so well known; but I believe God has ordered it on purpose out of mercy, that I might hear of him and be converted." He repeated what a troublesome night he had had, and what fears and terrors had oppressed him; but rejoicing said, "Now it is over! I am no more afraid, there is mercy in store for me." He told us also his escape out of the prison at New-York, and how he was forced to live upon berries near a month in the woods, before he got to Philadelphia, whether he travelled by night, and how near being destroyed by serpents he had been several times, and many other surprizing passages of his life he told us, with the deepest sense of the tender mercy

mercy of God, and thankful now that he had saved him to this time. Between whiles we sung here and there verses, which he had marked in our's and Watts's hymns, such as, "Go forth to Calvary go," &c. "The soul of Christ me sanctify;" and sometimes I read to him part of the scriptures, especially the history of our Saviour's sufferings, till to the pardoning of the dying thief, which affected him so much, that I stopped, and he prayed, "O say to my soul, this day shalt thou be with me in paradise;" which, he said, I believe will be so.

THUS we spent our time till the clock struck eleven, and then he said, with a composed countenance, "In about an hour I hope to be with our Saviour." We told him, you will love him much, because he has forgiven you much; and no doubt you will be ashamed to see him, when he meets you with many angels to bring you home. "O, said he, I am unworthy of his grace. I shall be ashamed to see him, I know I have deserved eternal torments; but I believe there is mercy for me, the devil has no more to do with me." I asked him, if he would like to live longer? "No, said he, I now long to be gone, and in a little time I shall be at home." For my part, I could have joyfully gone with him, and even longed for it: When you see the Lamb, said I, then think of us, and I believe you will soon see us both with you. He wept, and said, How glad shall I be to see you.

AND now the prison-doors were opened, and the noise of the crowd, and the sight of a vast guard with swords and staves might have shocked

him; but he never changed his countenance or shuddered, but behaved with such a lovely spirit, as I would wish in my last moments. When his chains were sawed off, and his arms pinioned, we kneeled down once more together in presence of all the officers, and besought the Lamb to attend him with his angels to the end, &c. Then we kissed him, and he us in the tenderest manner. So I at his right hand, and brother S—— at his left, we walked out of the prison all the way with him. The constables and officers took great care to keep off the horses and mob, so that we could talk to him, and sing, as he leaned upon us through the streets. But the more affecting part was, the blessing, when so many prayers and tears were poured out on both sides the way, from all the people, till we came to St. Magdalen's-hill, or, as it is called, Marlin's-hill, about half a mile out of town; he thanked the people for their love and good wishes, and, with a modest and lovely aspect, passed on chearful. As the way opened, and we could see such astonishing crouds of spectators, I put him in mind, thus was our Saviour led to his death for you, only he had no such attendance of friends in his shame, &c. Then we sung, "The Lamb with all his grief and smart," &c. "The blood-sweat trickling down thy face." When we had come so far as to see the gallows, then he looked up and said, "I have deserved it long ago, but now I am just at home, I shall soon be out of all my shame and misery."

As soon as we came under the gallows, the constables cleared a large circle for us, and when the sheriffs and gentlemen on horseback had commanded

manded silence, I gave out some verses of that hymn, "O thou that hearest when sinners cry," &c. and concluded, "The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—will see thou never shalt be lost." I asked him, if he had any thing more to say to the people? He said, no. Then I spoke out and said:

THE poor prisoner has already made a general confession of his unhappy life, and I have given it to Mr. Sheriff, who will make it public. He says, all what is written is true, and believes his death is the just punishment of his crimes; all you can do for him, is to join in praying for him till he has left the world.

WE then kneeled down with him, and prayed to him who once hung on the tree for us, and desired him afresh to forgive and absolve him, and grant him his peace, and open the way for him, which no man can shut, into the kingdom of God; to comfort and kiss him, and to take him home.

THE many thousands on horse and foot who attended, as well as sailors, ship-builders, and others, from whom one should scarce expect it, wept during the prayer beyond measure; and when I said the Lord's prayer, they all joined with the heartiest Amen I ever heard. Then I gave him into the arms of our Saviour, and blessed him in the name of the Lord Jesus, and of the blessed Trinity, and laid my hand upon his head while the tenderest tears trickled down his face.

WHILE the executioner was preparing the rope and raising the ladder, we sung some verses, and then

then fell on his neck before all and kissed him; and he hung upon me with a feeling which I cannot describe. Brother S—— also did the same, and then he cheerfully mounted the ladder, after I had once more kissed him. He was dressed quite neat and clean, his look melted all who looked on him. He said, "Pray do not be troubled for me, but take warning by me, both old and young; I shall now soon be at home, and am not afraid to die, because, though I believe I am the greatest sinner in the world, yet there is mercy for me. I hope, if there be any here whom I have wronged, you will forgive me, and I heartily forgive all." Seeing the gentleman he robbed last, namely Mr. J——, he spoke to him, and desired his pardon; who answered, he forgave him. And then he thanked the sheriff for his kindness to him, and desired he would take care to see him buried; and then last of all he looked with such a cheerful look on us, as I cannot forget, and said, "I give you many thousand thanks for your love and care bestowed upon me; may the Lord reward you!" We blessed him with all our hearts, and then he pulled the cap down his face and prayed in secret; but some sentences I heard distinctly, as, "Receive me to Abraham's bosom! let me be with thee this day in paradise! receive my spirit, dear Jesus, for I am coming to thee! I have no righteousness of my own, but the righteousness of the Son of God; therefore receive my spirit," &c.

AFTER he thus prayed a quarter of an hour, he dropped his handkerchief, as a sign when he would be turned off; but the executioner not observing it, he had it given him again, and soon after he dropped it a second time, and lift up his hand and said,

said, "Lord receive me," and was turned off. But while thousands of tears flowed from all faces, we stood looking on with unspeakable tenderness, till his breast had done heaving, and then chose to retire. A constable was so kind as to clear our way, and so we came home, though others of our friends staid and saw his corpse laid to rest in St. Thomas's church-yard.

THUS, my dear brother, I have sent you an account which will no doubt sound of mercy and judgment; and the blessings ever since are seen from the eyes of some hundreds of people in and about this town.

I AM quite tender with the living sense of the mercies and grace of our Saviour through the whole, and had it been only on this poor man's account, I would not but have come hither for all the gold in Arabia. I am

Your loving brother,

J. C.

The

The CONFESSION of EDWARD

LEE at *Haverford-West, May*
the 1st, 1753:

I Believe I was born in London, about the year 1729, and left very much exposed from my infancy, by being sent to nurse to persons who took no care of me, but who beat me continually, and almost half starved me; and this, together with my natural sinful inclination, put me upon doing many acts of pilfering and stealing, which at last proved my utter ruin. The history of my bad life would swell this my confession to a large book, with the particulars of which I will not trouble the world, but the most material of my crimes I will acknowledge with shame, and beseech all others who hear it, to take warning by my misfortunes.

THE first fault I remember to have been guilty of, was stealing some brass out of a man's pocket, to the value of six-pence, for which I was severely corrected, which for a good while deterred me from doing the like. But as I observed before, the ill usage I met with where I was nursed made me often run away, sometimes staid from home two or three days together, and often without a mouthful of victuals. Sometimes I staid a week away, but at last went off entirely, returning no more.

I was

I was often in the practice of stealing, sometimes I went into houses, and took victuals and cloaths, or whatever I could find, till that old proverb was verified in me, He first steals the egg, and then the hen.

In this employment I went on, sometimes at sea, sometimes on shore, till about the year 1745, I was apprehended, and put into gaol at Monmouth, for stealing money and cloaths; at the assizes I was ordered for transportation for seven years, and accordingly I was sent over to Virginia, but I soon made my escape from thence, and got to sea; continued abroad with good success a good while, and returning to my own country I forbore my thefts entirely, till I broke my leg at Swansea, which reduced me to poverty, and then I thought to help myself by my former unjust measures, in which I was discovered and confined in Carmarthen gaol, I think in the year 1748; there I broke out of prison and got off. Yet I did not take warning from all that had hitherto happened, but in a short time after broke open a gentleman's country-house in the north of England. I also committed other thefts of the same kind, and escaped all justice. I had taken out of the compting-house near fifty pounds in money, which served me a long time, and gave me such courage, that I would no longer think of working, or putting myself into a way to live, but spent money and time in all sorts of bad company, without any fear of God or devil, but thought to live in defiance of both, without any reflection on my latter end, no more than if I was to live for ever.

FROM the north of England, I went to London, my money being almost wasted; but on the road, and while I staid at London, my sins were of another kind, such as keeping bad company, drinking, gaming, swearing, whoring, &c. but I committed no remarkable robbery, till about January 1749, when I went into Buckinghamshire, and at a place not far from Whebara Green, I broke open a house and took seven or eight pounds in money, gold rings, &c. I was seized the same day, and sent prisoner to the county gaol at Eglisbury, at the ensuing assizes I was found guilty, and condemned by judge A—— to die; but was reprieved and sent a second time to Virginia; all this happened in the same year. I was sold to a gentleman who loved me very much, and let me live with him as I desired, so that I did what I pleased, and in almost all matters my words were a law to him, so much did he esteem my advice, and indeed I did him all the justice in my power, nor did I wrong him in any thing, except sometimes in giving away drams of rum, to persons whom I respected, without his leave. I was appointed to oversee his negroes, and take account of all that passed in his plantations, besides the chief, and almost all his effects were intrusted to my hands, but in about a year after it pleased God to call him away, and as his estate was not clear, his negroes, slaves, &c. were sold; and as I did not like to live with the executors, I was sold to one who did not treat me like my old master, but on the contrary I was ill used, which did not well agree with me, and this put me on resolving to make my escape, which I soon after attempted, and was away about two days, when I was apprehended,

hended, and brought before a justice of peace, who ordered me to be whipped; and after I had received twenty lashes upon my bare back, I was sent back to my master with a constable; I was before bad, but now ten times worse, so that I could not bear my hard fate, but was resolved to run away again the first opportunity, let what would be the consequence. Accordingly I made a counterfeit pass, and made off, but was in three days taken up and examined, notwithstanding my pass, and kept prisoner till inquiry was made if any master had lost his slave. But after some days, when none claimed or sought after me, I was set at liberty, and then reached Philadelphia, which was at least one hundred and eighty miles off.

WHEN I was within thirty miles of Philadelphia, I was again apprehended and examined before a justice of peace, but now I was safe, and got clear off into Philadelphia. The difficulties and hardships I endured in this journey are almost incredible, and would melt any heart to hear it related; oftentimes I was in the greatest danger, by being obliged to sleep in woods, among the wild beasts and serpents, and sometimes when resting myself have had the dangerous snakes run over me, and besides I have often been obliged to travel three or four days without any thing to eat, and sometimes have gone a whole day without water in that hot country. But however shocking and terrifying this might be, it had no effect on my heart. When I was in Philadelphia I resolved to go to New-York, and having got about ten shillings, it paid my expences till I arrived safe there.

HERE, in company with another, I broke open a house, and took away sixty-five or seventy pounds; but one night, as I was very much in liquor, I was discovered and put into prison with my companion. When we had been confined about a week, we broke out and made our escape to the mountains, and there made the best of our way to Philadelphia; again on our journey we suffered exceedingly, were obliged to lie in the woods all day for fear of being discovered, and travelled all night. Thus we were almost starved, and some days had nothing to eat. One night we came to a house where our hunger made us determine, if possible, to get some victuals, and accordingly we broke in, but found no provision, only about forty or fifty pounds in money, which, though we could neither eat nor drink, we could not forbear taking it, that it might hereafter be of service to us. After two days farther journeying, in which we were so weak with fatigue, that we scarce could move, we came to a house where we got meat and drink, to our great comfort, and now we came forward to the main road between New-York and Philadelphia, where we overtook the new waggon, in which we ventured, and returned within thirty miles of Philadelphia; here we staid some days to refresh ourselves, and then came into the city, and seemed again quite out of danger. But, as I had done often before, I thought little of my deliverance, nor gave any glory to God for saving so evidently my life or averting his judgments, but forgot all my hardships, and entered my bad company afresh, in which I continued to commit many roguish tricks, till again I resolved to go to sea, where I might have done well, could I have rested from my abominable

abominable vices. But when I was in the island of St. Eustache in the West-Indies, I broke open a shop by myself, and stole to the value of fifty pounds, and yet got off undiscovered.

I WENT another voyage to Antigua, from whence, after Christmas 1752, I returned to Wales, and in Haverford-West, in the county of Pembroke, with one Jones a taylor, and William Hill a brick-maker, broke into Mr. Jones's in Bridge-Street, whence I took plate, &c. and which being found upon me, was the means of my coming to this shameful end.

EDWARD LEE.

THIS he wrote the day before he suffered, and a few hours before he went to execution, after his fetters were taken off, he delivered it in the presence of Mr. — the sheriff, Mr. Cennick, and Mr. S——.

I HAVE been guilty of much uncleanness, whoredom, &c. and lived wickedly in the sight of the Lord, and sinned with a high hand, and ran into many kinds of sin, I may say all, that of murder excepted, which I never was guilty of, though I have committed crimes as bad, so that I might justly expect no mercy, or forgiveness, and not only the punishment and shame I am to suffer is just, but should death eternal be my portion, and the bitter pains of hell the recompence of my sins, it would be just also. But I do believe there is mercy in store for me still, though I am unworthy of it, but there is forgiveness for me and all others
who

who faithfully ask it of him, whose mercy endures for ever. I hope and believe that God has brought my body to this end, that my soul may be saved, which I pray him to do of his infinite goodness and mercy, though I believe there are many in hell, who have not sinned so much as me. The Lord is merciful and long-suffering, and of great goodness, and will not the death of a sinner, but rather that he would turn from his wickedness and live; and now though they kill my body, yet I believe my soul shall live with God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who died for me and all mankind.

EDWARD LEE.



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